

*Turning to GOD, an effectual Way
of Escaping threatened Judgments.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd in
N E W - C O U R T,

February 6, 1756.

Being the Day appointed by Authority for
a Public F A S T.

By J O S E P H P I T T S.
Publish'd at the Request of Many who heard it.

*Repent and turn from all your Transgressions, so Iniquity
shall not be your Ruin. Ezek. xviii. 30.*

*Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of Hosts, and I
will turn unto you, saith the LORD of Hosts.
Zech. i. 3.*



L O N D O N:

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P R E F A C E.

 *HE following plain Discourse was preached to two numerous Assemblies*, on the Day appointed by his MAJESTY for a General Fast. Blessed be the LORD GOD, who put such a Thing as this in the Heart of the KING †.*

It must give great Pleasure to all true Lovers of their Country, to hear that the Day was so well observ'd in every Part of the Kingdom; as we are inform'd it was, a very few contemptible Persons excepted. Who were, it is to be presumed, acted by the same (may we not say perverse?) Spirit with their Brethren in Pensylvania, who if they could suffer alone, would deserve very little Pity.

And yet it cannot but fill every serious Person with Concern, to find that the Impressions which seemed to be made on the Minds of most People, should, as to the far greater Part, so very soon wear off. PLAYS were, as usual, acted the next Evening, (tho' a Saturday) and the Lord's-Day immediately following was profaned in a scandalous Manner; as it hath been for MANY Years, to the Reproach of a Protestant Nation. Are there not good Laws for the due Observation of that holy Day? Why don't our Magistrates put them in Execution? Are they not bound to do it, by the Oath which they take, when sworn into their respective Offices? What they can do, is evident

* In New-Court, near Lincoln's-Inn, and Swallow-Street, near St. James'-Church.

† Ezra vii. 27.

P R E F A C E.

from what they did on the late Fast : for which they are to be highly commended. But why do not they exert their Authority in the same Manner, every Lord's-Day ? that This might be kept with equal Strictness, the Fast was. The Profanation of the Sabbath is one of the crying Sins of the present Age.

When I composed this Sermon, I had not the least Intention of making it more public, than delivering it from the Pulpit. But the Audience seemed to listen with great Attention to it, and to be not a little affected with it. And several of my Friends, (who I fear, are too much prejudiced in my Favour) have assured me, that All whom they have conversed with about it, declared their Approbation of it, and desired me to publish it. And it is in Compliance with their Request I do it.

If what I have said, should be the least Means of Spiriting Any up more against the FRENCH, our avowed (if not natural) Enemies ; and in a more especial Manner, if it should be instrumental in the Hand of the DIVINE SPIRIT, of prevailing with one Person to turn from Sin, to GOD and CHRIST with all his Heart, I shall think myself very happy ; and pay no regard to the Contempt which may be cast on me and it, by Those who think Themselves the Men, and that Wisdom is only in Them, and will die with Them.

JO. PITTS.

*Little Kirby-Street,
Feb. 16, 1756.*



JOEL ii. 12.

*Therefore also now saith the LORD,
turn ye even unto me with all
your Heart, and with Fasting,
and with Weeping, and with
Mourning.*

IN these Words, for I shall not
spend any Time in considering
the Context, we have
First, A great and necessary
Duty recommended, or enjoined, *Turning
to the LORD.*

Secondly, The Manner in which God
expects People should turn to him; *with
all their Heart, with Fasting, with Weep-
ing, and with Mourning.* When I have
explained these, I will

B

Thirdly,

Thirdly, conclude with a suitable Application.

First, Let us open the Nature of the Duty here recommended, and enjoined ; Turning to the LORD. Now this supposes,

1st. That we have revolted from God.

2dly, That we are convinced of the Wickedness of such a Practice.

3dly, That we see the Danger of continuing in this State or Condition.

4thly, Our being satisfied that we may with Safety return to God ; which is a great Mercy.

5thly, That we are sensible of the absolute Necessity of doing this. We not only *may*, but *must* turn to God.

6thly and lastly, Being assisted by his Grace, and drawn by his Spirit, we *actually* turn to him,

1st,

1st, Turning to God plainly supposes, that we have revolted from Him. This all Mankind did in *Adam*. He represented all his Race, when God entered into a Covenant of Life with him, or, as it is usually called, the Covenant of Works. All his Posterity were to stand, or fall, in and with him; and therefore, as he broke that Covenant by sinning against God, they must, and did All sin in him, and fall with him, in that first Transgression. By *one Man's*, i. e. *Adam's Disobedience*, many, all whose federal Head he was, *were made Sinners* *. He rebelled against God his Sovereign who created him, and made him Lord of this lower World, giving him Dominion over all the other Creatures in it †. And hereupon, not only he himself, but *the whole World*, or all who were to descend from him by ordinary Generation, *became guilty before God* ‡.

And then, all who live to Years of Discretion, have also *actually* revolted from God, or rebelled against him. And this

* Rom. v. 12. & 19.

† Psalm viii. 6, &c.

‡ Rom. iii. 19. & 23.

in numberless Instances; for every sin is a Transgression of the Law of God *.

2dly, Turning to God supposes, we are convinced of the Wickedness of revolting from him. And how great is the Evil of Sin? Oh, the malignity there is in it! We cannot perfectly describe it. Of what an heinous Nature must Rebellion against God be? There can be no Reason assigned for it. For God is not only the *greatest*, but also the *best* of Beings. Is continually doing us good, and *daily loading us with Benefits*. What egregious Folly to forsake and turn our Backs on him, who alone can make us happy, and *go after vain Things which cannot profit* †?

And a great Happiness it is to see the exceeding Sinfulness of Sin, indeed the infinite Evil there is in it. This it is the holy Spirit's Work to convince us of ‡.

3dly, That we see the Danger of continuing in this State or Condition. Being

* 1 John iii. 4.
† John xvi. 8, 9.

‡ 1 Sam. xii. 20, 21.

by Nature blind, we perceive nothing of of this. But when our Eyes are opened, we are amazed at our Stupidity ; that we should be so easy and unconcerned, when on the Brink of Hell, and so very near everlasting Destruction. Then we cry out, *Wo to us ! we are undone ! What must we do to be saved ? Who can deliver us from Wrath to come **.

4thly, Our being satisfied, that we may with Safety return to God ; which is a great Mercy. This *Adam* did not know, till God was pleased to reveal it to him. He was for fleeing and *hiding himself from the Presence of the Lord God, among the Trees of the Garden †*. Vain, foolish Attempt ! *Satan* who had prevailed with him to revolt from God, would now have persuaded him, it was impossible for him ever to return to God, or for God to be reconciled to him. And it must be owned, that an absolute God must to Sinners be a *consuming Fire ‡*. But God very soon declared his gracious Intentions towards

* Acts ii. 37. xvi. 30.

‡ Heb. xii. 29.

† Gen. iii. 8.

Adam,

Adam, and his miserable Race, made so by him *. In Christ God is willing to be reconciled to, and at Peace with us †. And through Him, or in His Name, we may return, and draw nigh to God. This Liberty God allows us, for which we are obliged to the Lord Jesus Christ.

5thly, That we are sensible of the Necessity of doing this. We not only *may*, but *must* return to God.

1. 'Tis our Duty, as God commands it. Thus in the Text; and the next Verse, *Rent your Heart, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God*: And in several other Places of Scripture ‡. Oh, the gracious Condescension of God!

2. We must inevitably perish if we don't turn to Him. *They who are far from God shall perish; and God will destroy all that go a Whoring from Him* §. If our Peace is not made with God, thro' Christ, but we

* Gen. iii. 15. † 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. ‡ See Hof. xiv. 2. Jer. iii. 12, 14, 27. § Psal. lxxiii. 27.

continue Enemies to Him all our Lives, He will avenge himself on us, as his Adversaries. He will order *those his Enemies, who never would that He, or his Son, should reign over them, to be brought, and slain before Him, and send them away into everlasting Punishment* *. This will be the End of all finally impenitent Sinners, and Unbelievers.

6thly, and lastly. Being assisted by his Grace, and drawn by his Spirit, we actually turn to God, and this with Readiness and Joy. *Turn thou me, saith Ephraim, and I shall be turned* †. There is no Force on the Will in Conversion; but we act with perfect Freedom, *being made willing in the Day of Christ's Power*. As the Father promised the Son, his People should be ‡.

The Second general Head is to enquire in what Manner God expects People should turn to Him. And this we are informed in our Text.

* Luke xix. 27. Matt. xxv. 46. † Jer. xxxi. 18.
‡ Psal. cx. 3.

1st, With all their Heart.
 2dly, With Fasting.
 3dly, With Weeping, and
 4thly, With Mourning. A few Hints as
 to each of these.

1st, We must turn to God with all our Heart.

1. With the Heart, that is, in Sincerity, *not feignedly*. God complains of Judah, that *she turned not to Him with her whole Heart, but feignedly* * : In Falshood 'tis in the Original. As if God could be imposed upon by mere Pretences, or an outward Show. It will signify nothing *to draw nigh to God, and worship Him with the Mouth, and honour Him with our Lips, i. e. profess to do so, if our Hearts are at the same Time far from Him* †. 'Tis the Heart God looketh to ‡. This He knows all the Thoughts of §. And if it is not with *This* we turn to Him, He will not regard the Professions we make, but despise and reject us.

* Jer. iii. 10. † Matt. xv. 8. ‡ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.
 § 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

2. It must be with our whole Heart. Not reserving any Place for Sin, which is so contrary to God's Nature, Will and Honour, as well as our most dangerous Enemy. Not retaining the least Affection for any Lust. But resolving to devote ourselves *intirely* to God, every Power and Faculty of our Souls. Saying with the Church, *O LORD our God, other Lords besides thee have had Dominion over us: But by thee only will we make mention of thy Name **.

2dly, We are to turn to God with Fasting. This was frequently enjoined under the Old Testament Dispensation. In the Chapter wherein our Text is, Verse 15. and so the preceding Chapter, Verse 14. And it is what God's People often practised. When that excellent Prince *Jehoshaphat* had News brought him, that the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, and Others, were about to invade his Dominions, what Method did he take? The best he could, and which all wise and pious Princes will take, on like Occasions. *He set himself to seek the LORD,*

* Isai. xxvi. 13.

*and proclaimed a Fast throughout all Judah. Which was religiously observed, the King setting a good Example to his Subjects *. So did Ezra, and he and the People with him, kept it. Nor did they fast and pray in vain. God was intreated of them †.*

i. It may be very proper on some more solemn Occasions, to abstain from Food, at least those pleasant Meats or Delicates, which may be lawfully used at other Times, with Thanksgiving and Caution. And this, whether the Occasion be of a private, or of a more publick Nature. *David fasted when his Child was sick ‡.* So did *Nebemiah*, when he heard of the Misery of *Jerusalem*, and the great Distress his Brethren there were in §. And our blessed Lord recommends the Practice to his Disciples ||. Tho', because He once fasted forty Days, I think it is perfectly ridiculous to pretend to imitate him therein, and fast forty Days every Year. And especially, when what they call *Lent* is kept as the *Papists* and

* See 2 Chron. xx. 1—19. † See Ezra viii. 21.—23. ‡ 2 Sam. xii. 16, &c. § Nehem. i. 4. || Matt. vi. 16, &c.

some others do, which is in Fact, *farcing deliciously*.

2. We are not required to fast so strictly, or with such Severity, as to unfit ourselves for other Duties. God requires *Mercy, and not Sacrifice* *. And I think, Persons must in such Cases judge for themselves, and let every one be fully satisfied in his own Mind. Nor should we despise, or condemn one another. As the Apostle argues with Respect to Meats, *One believeth that he may eat all Things : Another that is weak eateth Herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not : And let not him who eateth not, judge him that eateth : For God hath received them both* †. But,

3. 'Tis of much more Importance to humble our Souls before God, and mortify our Corruptions. These are what war against our precious and immortal Souls ‡; and keep up the War between God and us. And if our Eye spares them, God will not spare us, but punish us as our Iniquities deserve.

* Matt. ix. 13. † Rom. xiv. 2, &c. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 11.

3dly, We should turn to God with Weeping. Now

1. 'Tis well when we can show our Grief for Sin by Tears. When our *Heads are as Waters, and our Eyes a Fountain of Tears. And Rivers of Waters run down our Eyes*, because we, and Others have broke God's holy and righteous Law *. This is frequently the Case with many, when under some great Affliction. Tears flow more freely, and plentifully at such Times, than on Account of Sin: Tho' *this* is the Cause of all Trouble and Sorrow. But then,

2. These depend more on the natural Temper and Constitution, than are a Sign of godly Sorrow. The Eyes may shed many Tears, in great Abundance, and yet the Heart remain *as hard as an Adamant, or the nether Mill-stone*.

4thly, We must do it with Mourning. If we are not melted into Tears, or cannot weep as others do, we should mourn in-

* Psal. cxix. 136.

wardly for Sin. Our Hearts should be grieved, and our Souls mourn, to think,

1. How God hath been dishonoured by our Transgressions. And when this is one of the principal Causes of our Concern, it shews that *we sorrow after a godly Sort* *, and that *our Repentance is unto Life* †.

2. What we deserve for them ; not only temporal Judgments, but eternal Punishment. *The Wages of Sin is Death* ‡.

The third and last Thing is the Application. And,

1. What a Mercy is it, that God will permit, yea doth command Sinners to turn to him? He could not need any of us, more than he did the finning Angels. There was no such Liberty allowed to them. No Provision made for their Return to God, when they had once rebelled against him §. And yet we are bid to turn to God, and it is made our Duty, tho' we have departed from, and *forgotten him*,

* 2 Cor vii. 11. † Acts xi. 18. ‡ Rom. vi. 23.
§ 2 Pet. ii. 4.

Ways and Times without number *. How should our Souls bless the Lord for the Distinction which is made between us and them †? 'Tis all of Grace.

2. What hardened Wretches must they be, who, when God calls on them, refuse to turn to him, and say they will not return ‡? *No, we have loved Strangers, and after them we will go* §. They determine to go on in their Trespases, come what will. They will not turn from the Evil of their Ways, tho' beseeched by Ministers in God's Name, and Christ's Stead, and faithfully warned of their Danger. The Time will come when they shall see their Folly. God grant it may be before it is too late. *LORD, when thy Hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed* ||.

3. The sooner we turn from Sin to God, the better. Whether as a Nation, or as particular Persons. *Young Ones*, let me entreat you to turn to God. I am sure

* Jer. ii. 32. † See Heb. ii. 16. ‡ Jer. v. 3.
§ Chap. ii. 25, 31. || Isai. xxvi. 11.

you'll never repent of having done it too soon. *Boast not of To-morrow*, much less of many Years, *You know not what a Day may bring forth* *. What can be more uncertain than Life? 'Tis but as a Vapour that appeareth for a little Time, and then vanisheth away †.

And as for *old Sinners*, surely it must be *high Time* for you to turn to God. May He give you Grace so to do.

4. Let us see to it, that we are sincere in all our Professions of Humiliation, and Sorrow for Sin. Men may be deceived; there is no great Difficulty in doing that. But God *cannot*; nor will he be mocked ‡.

5. Let our Concern be more for Sin, the Evil there is in it, than for all the Evils we meet with on Account of it.

6. We shall have Reason to mourn for Sin all our Days, because we are not one without being guilty of it. *There is not a just Man upon Earth that doeth good, and sinneth not* §.

* Prov. xxvii. 1. † Jam. iv. 14. ‡ Gal. vi. 7.
§ Eccles. vii. 20.

7. This should wean us from the present, which is such an evil World. In which there are so many Temptations, and Snares, so much Corruption and Sin, as well as Sorrow.

8. Let Believers please themselves with the Thoughts of Heaven, where there is neither the least Sin, nor Sorrow. There we shall always be in the Presence of God, and of the Lamb. Constantly *see Christ as he is* *, and be perfectly happy in the full Enjoyment of God and Him, to all Eternity.

But it will, I apprehend, be expected, that I should make some Improvement of this Subject, more immediately suited to the Occasion of our meeting together at *this Time*. God calls on his People in the Text, to turn to him. And have not we in these Nations a loud Call this Day, yea many loud Calls to turn to the Lord? That we have revolted from God, foolishly and wickedly departed from him, I think none will, or can dispute. 'Tis true, we are a People

* 1 John iii. 2.

highly favoured of the Lord. I know no Nation under Heaven to be compared with us for Privileges; and these both Civil and Religious. Have we not the BEST KING in the World on the Throne? deservedly stiled the FATHER of his People, who delighteth in their Prosperity; and hath hazarded, and I am persuaded, would be very ready again to hazard his Life, in their Defence. One, who hath constantly made the Laws of the Land the Rule of his Government. How very different is *Great-Britain* from *France*? Where the Subjects have nothing they can call their own, and the Will of the Prince is a Law *.

And don't we also enjoy *the Gospel in the Purity of it*? Have we not the holy Scriptures in our own Mother-Tongue? May we not read them whenever we will? What would not our poor persecuted Brethren in *France*, and other Parts beyond the Seas, give for our Advantages? Let us pity them, and pray for them. Are we not commanded *to search the Scriptures*?

* Hoc volo, sic Jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas.
Juvenal Sat. vi. Lin. 222.

and try every Spirit, and Doctrine by them *? We are not bound to act by an *implicit Faith*, and take things upon Trust, as the Laity, or common People among the *Papists* are: Who are taught to believe whatever their *designing Priests* tell them, on Pain of Damnation.

But alas! can we say, that our Returns have been answerable to these our Privileges? Very far from it indeed. I am afraid, there are few, if any Nations, exceed us in Sin and Wickedness. What Sins are we not notorious, I was going to say infamous, for? How very common are Drunkenness, and Swearing, and Lewdness, and other crying Abominations amongst us? How is the Lord's-Day profaned, by going Journies, Walking in the Fields for Diversion, Frequenting public Houses; by unnecessary Visits, and shocking to tell! by playing at Cards? How much precious Time, and I fear more Money too than some who attend them can well afford, is spent in Conforts, Balls, Plays, Opera's, and other Entertainments?

* John v. 39. I John iv. 1.

And

And you would think me inexcusable if I omitted those VILEST of Abominations, *Masquerades*, which ought not to be mentioned, but with the utmost Detestation, and Abhorrence. 'Tis surprizing, Husbands should suffer their Wives, or Parents permit their Children to go to a Place, where they must be exposed to such great Temptations, of which that of *Gaming*, I fear, is one of the least. Will any wonder, if from the *Masquerades*, Adjournments should be made to Bagnio's? Oh, to this without all Doubt, is it in a great Measure owing, that we have so many *Robberies*, and *Murders*; that it is not safe to travel on the Roads by Day, nor to walk even in our Streets by Night.

And have not too many of those who would be thought to make a *stricter Profession of Religion*, turned aside from God? How is Family-Prayer neglected? Were God to pour out his Wrath on every prayerless Family in our Land, what dreadful Work would be made amongst us? Would not most Houses be left desolate? And yet, this is what such are threaten'd

with, as well as *the Heathen who have not known God*, acknowledged, and worshipped Him *.

What numbers are there even among *Protestant Dissenters*, who are gone off from the Purity of the Gospel, not only in Discipline, but in Doctrine too? Deny and oppose the most important Truths, which are the very Foundation of Christianity, and treat them with the utmost Contempt. Such as the true and proper Divinity of Christ, his Satisfaction, and Righteousness : Without which we should have no Ground to hope for Pardon, and Justification now, nor compleat Salvation hereafter. The Deity, yea the Personality of the Holy Spirit, his gracious Assistance, and powerful Operations. Oh, *how much is the Glory departed from us?* May not *Ichabod* be written on us †? Where is the Glory? Where is that Love to God and Christ, that Zeal for his Honour, that Concern for his Glory, which our Forefathers were deservedly so renowned for? They are dead and gone, and

* Jer. x. 25.

† 1 Sam. iv. 21, 22.

their

their Spirit in a great Measure died with them. And when *vital* and *experimental* Religion is branded with the invidious Name of *Enthusiasm*, shall we be surprized that *practical* Godliness is so little regarded, and at so low an Ebb?

Well, by these, and many other such Things as these, have we justly provoked the LORD to Anger. And indeed, we may wonder, He hath not visited us with much greater Severity for them, and that *his Soul hath not been avenged on such a Nation as this* *. He hath not yet destroy'd us: Blessed be his Name. But if we do not speedily turn to Him, why should we expect that He will continue to spare and save us? He is plainly calling on us in his Word, and very loudly by his Providence. Who can doubt of this, that consider what He hath lately done in other Parts of the World? *That most dreadful Earthquake*, with which He in so very awful a Manner visited *Portugal*, several Parts of *Spain*, and of which we have still had more shocking Accounts from *Morocco* in *Africa*.

* Jer. v. 9.

I am inclined to think, there scarce ever was so very extensive an one before. And God could, and justly might have so ordered it, that we should have been *the principal Seat* of that Desolation. *England* might have been in the same melancholy Situation with *Portugal*, and *London* laid as much waste as *Lisbon*. And this would have been the Case, if *God had dealt with us after our Sins, and rewarded us according to our Iniquities* *.

And have we hearkened and attended to this *so very loud a Call*? Few, it is to be feared, have been affected with it as they ought. Was there not a *Masquerade* to have been about a Fortnight since? I wonder how *such a Thing* could be so much as thought of, when a *general public Fast* had been appointed by Authority, as on this Day. But our good King expressly order'd, it should not be. I am persuaded, you will All join with me in this Wish, *May there never be one more in our Land*. The King of *Spain*, we are told, hath prohibited all *Theatrical* Entertainments,

* Psal. ciii. 10.

on this Account. And I wish his Example might be followed in *England* *. 'Tis a Reproach to us, that *Papists* in many Things, act better than those who call themselves *Protestants*. Oh that we may *bear and fear, and do no more so wickedly* †.

Another loud Call we have to turn to God, is the WAR, which we seem to be entering upon with *France*, or rather are already engaged in. At least most think it very difficult to distinguish it from an actual War. Great Preparations are that proud, insolent, and most perfidious People making, and threaten to *invade* us. And should they be permitted to land a numerous Army on our Coasts, whatever the Issue might be, it would cause a great deal of Confusion and Consternation, and much Blood would in all Probability be shed. Tho' I would hope, we should in such a Case, *unite as one Man*, against *so faithless and cruel an Enemy*, who want to establish POPERY, and an ARBITRARY GOVERNMENT amongst us. But how far God may suffer them to proceed, as a Scourge for our

* *Fas est & ab hoste doceri.* † Deut. xiii. 11.

Sins, we cannot tell. Should they prevail, we could expect no Favour from them, for *their tender Mercies are Cruelty* *. Witness *the horrid Massacre of the Protestants at Paris, Anno 1572*, and the many Persecutions they have suffered since, and are now suffering †.

We are preparing to give them a warm Reception, if they should make any Attempt of this Nature. And we ought to be very thankful that we have such considerable Armaments both by Sea and Land, to oppose them. But let us not *trust in an Arm of Flesh* ‡. We have seen, or might have seen, the Folly of this, in the Disappointment we met with the last Year in *America*. I mean the Defeat, *the shameful Defeat* of our Forces under *General Braddock*, principally by the *Indians*, tho' much inferior in Number §. Let us engage God on

* Prov. xii. 10.

† See Mr. Gibbons's two Discourses on this most affecting Subject, lately publish'd.

‡ Jer. xvii. 5.

§ See an excellent Sermon preached by Mr. Samuel Davies in *Virginia*, to an independant Company of Volunteers, intituled, *Religion and Patriotism, the Constituents of a good Soldier*. Which I heartily wish in the Hands of All his Majesty's Forces.

our Side ; which, if we turn to Him with our whole Heart, we may be assured, He will be. What Schemes the Enemy have been laying, we don't certainly know. But this we know, that God is acquainted with them, and can *turn all their Counsels into Foolishness* ; as He did *Ahitophel's*, on *David's* Prayer against him *. He can easily *disappoint the Devices of the Crafty*, so that *their Hands shall not be able to perform their Enterprize* †.

The Sword, I think, we may say is drawn, and may have a Commission to devour, or destroy much Flesh. And if we should not be the immediate Seat of War, yet our Colonies in *America* are so. And we have heard of some of the *horrid Barbarities*, which have been committed on many of our Brethren in those Parts, by *the savage Indians*, spirited up by *the still more savage FRENCH* ‡. The Lord appear for them, and send them speedy Help. May those who have the Management of

* 2 Sam. xv. 31. † Job v. 12, 13.

‡ See the Sermon above referred to.

public Affairs be directed to such Measures, as shall be most effectual for driving the Enemy out of those Possessions, which they have so unjustly seized on. And, if it be the Will of God, may they be so humbled and weakened, as not to have it in their Power (for a Will they have always had) to disturb the Peace of other Nations, for MANY Years. That we may in due Time have an honourable and lasting Peace, and *fit every Man under his own Vine, and under his Fig-tree, and have none to make us afraid. And there may be no Hurting or Destroying in all God's holy Mountain* *.

But above all let us be earnest with God, to revive Religion in the midst of us. And in order to this, that he would be pleased to *pour out his Spirit upon us*. Though we are indeed sunk very low, God can cause a Revival. And if *a general and genuine Reformation* ever is effected, I am sure it must be, not by any created Power

* Micah iv. 4. Isai. xi. 9.

or Might, *but by the Spirit of the LORD of Hosts* *.

Indeed, *an external* Reformation might in a great Measure be brought about, were Magistrates but diligent and faithful in the Execution of their Office. A Stop might be put to many of those Sins, which are a *Reproach to any People* †, and *because of which our Land mourns* ‡. And temporal Judgments might by *this Means* be prevented, or delayed: As in the Case of *Nineveh* §. The Prophet *Jonah* had declared, That in forty Days *Nineveh* should be destroyed. This was not *an absolute*, but a *conditional* Threatning, as is evident from the Event; and it is plain, the King and his Nobles understood it in this Sense. We have a certain Rule to go by in all Cases of this Nature. *Jeremiah* xviii. 7. and 8. *At what Instant, says God, I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil,*

* *Zech.* iv. 6. † *Prov.* xiv. 34. ‡ *Jer.* xxiii. 10. *Hosea* iv. 2, 3. § See *Jonah* iii. Chap.

then I will repent of the Evil which I thought to do unto them. When Word was brought to the King of Nineveh of the Preaching of *Jonah*, and the awful Message he came from God with, he immediately *caused a Proclamation to be published for a general Fast.* The like to which, I believe, is not to be met with in any History. For *neither Man nor Beast, Herd, nor Flock, were to taste any Thing; neither to feed, nor to drink Water.* And this was strictly observed from the Greatest to the Least of them. *They all put on Sackcloth, in token of their Humiliation, and cried mightily unto God; and turned from their evil Ways.* They had a PERADVENTURE, *Who can tell, say they, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce Anger, that we perish not?* And we are told, that *God saw their Works, that they turned from their evil Way, and God repented of the Evil which He had said that He would do unto them, and He did it not.* Not that we are to imagine, God did *really* repent, in the proper Sense of the Word. We are assured, *the Strength of Israel will not repent* *. We may say He

* Sam. xv. 29,

cannot. 'Tis as impossible He should, as that he should lie *. Such Expressions when applied to God in Scripture, *that it repented the LORD that He had made Man, and it grieved Him at his Heart †*, and the like, are not to be understood *literally*. They are spoke *after the Manner of Men*, and in Condescension to our Weakness. We must strip the Metaphors of every thing which in the least favours of Imperfection, and interpret them in such a Sense as will not derogate from the Glory of any of the Divine Attributes. There is a Change in us when we repent: But God is immutable. He is JEHOVAH. The Great I AM never changes, but is always the same ‡. *With the Father of Lights there is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning §*. But God may be said to repent, when he alters the Course of his Providence, or acts in the same Manner as Men do when they repent ||.

* Heb. vi. 18. † Gen. vi. 6. and 7. ‡ Mal. iii. 6.
§ Jam. i. 17. || See Dr. Ridgley's Body of Divinity,
Vol. 1st, p. 240, &c.

And

And was it not the same with respect to that most wicked King *Ahab*? concerning whom 'tis said, *there was none like to him, who did sell himself to work Wickedness in the Sight of the LORD* *. When *Elijah* the Prophet denounced Judgments against him, we are told, *that he rent his Clothes, and put Sackcloth upon his Flesh, and fasted, and lay in Sackcloth, and went softly* †. All which were Signs of Humiliation, tho' he never truly repented of his Wickedness. And yet God said to *Elijah*, *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the threatened Evil in his Days: But in his Son's Days will I bring the Evil upon his House* ‡. Thus we see that temporal Judgments have been averted by an external Humiliation and Repentance: And if we could but see *this*, and a Reformation, there would be good Ground to hope concerning our Land and Nation.

But then, we should desire also that Religion may be revived *in the Power of it*,

* 1 Kings xxi. 25. † Verse 27. ‡ Verse 29.
and

and the Kingdom of *Christ* enlarged, by many Subjects being brought into it, and great Numbers *added to his Churches, such as shall be saved* §. But to draw towards a Close.

However others may behave, let us resolve, through divine Grace, to turn to the LORD. Let us be deeply humbled for our own personal Sins, and mourn every one apart, that we have done so much to provoke God *. And desire, we may stand prepared for the whole of his Will. What may be in the Womb of Providence we know not; nor is it fit we should. These Things are wisely hid from us. *Secret Things belong to God*, and not to us †. Therefore we should not want to pry into them, nor be anxiously solicitous about Futurity. Let us make the *revealed Will of God* the Rule of our *Practice*, as well as *Faith*. Consult the holy Scriptures, in which we are plainly told *what the LORD our God requireth of us* ‡: and be diligent in the Discharge of our Duty, leaving all Events with Him, who is infi-

§ Acts ii. 47.
xxix. 29.

* Zech. xii. 12.

† Micah vi. 8.

‡ Deut.

nitely wise, and cannot err. If we *have fled for Refuge to lay hold on the Hope set before us ¶*, closed with Christ, or accepted him as he is exhibited, and offered in the Gospel; We may be assured, God is our God, and Father in him. And if so, every Dispensation of Providence is in Mercy to us. In the greatest Afflictions which we are exercised with, *God deals with us as with Children; and all Things work together for good to us*, and shall end well at last *. Then, come Prosperity, or come Adversity, come Peace, or come War, yea, come Life, or come Death, we shall be secure. We shall either be saved in the Day of the Lord's Anger †: Or if we should fall in the common Calamity, our Souls will be safe, *being bound in the Bundle of Life with the Lord our God ‡*. When we commit these into the Hands of Christ, who hath redeemed us with his Blood, saying with holy Stephen, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit §*, He will order his Angels to conduct them to *Abraham's Bosom ||*, yea, we may say to his own. For

¶ Heb. vi. 18. * Rom. viii. 28. Heb. xii. 6, &c.
 † Zeph. ii. 3. ‡ 1 Sam. xxv. 29. § Acts vii. 59.
 || Luke xvi. 22.

He hath promised to *receive them to himself*, and *will keep them to the great Day ¶*.

And even our Bodies, which were formed of the Dust of the Ground, and *must then return to the Earth out of which they were taken **, and see Corruption, He will assuredly raise again out of their Graves, and reunite them with our Souls, when *He hath fashioned them like unto his own glorious Body †*.

If we are true Believers, then tho' God should again think fit to *shake terribly the Earth ‡*, and this Part of the Globe on which we dwell, We shall not need to fear. No, not *tho' the Earth was to be removed, and tho' the Mountains were to be carried into the Midst of the Sea §*. For the Rock, on which we have built, can never be shaken, Christ, who is the Rock of Ages; nor the Kingdom of which we are Heirs, ever be moved ¶.

¶ John xiv. 3. 2 Tim. i. 12.
 † Phil. iii. 21. ‡ Isa. ii. 19.
 xlv. 1.—3. ¶ Heb. xii. 28.

* Gen. iii. 19.
 § See Psal.

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But

But what will you do, O presumptuous Sinners, at such a Time? *Whither will you flee? And where will you leave your Glory* *? You cannot resist the Almighty Arm of God, nor hide yourselves from his All-seeing Eye. Don't think of contending with Him. Are Worms a Match for Omnipotence? *Who knoweth the Power of his Anger* †? *He is mighty in Strength, as well as wise in Heart: and none ever hardened themselves against Him and prosper'd* ‡.

And as vain would it be for you to imagine, you can conceal yourselves from Him. Were the Rocks and Mountains to fall on you, He could easily remove them: *They could not hide you from his Face* §. Nay, if you were to dig into Hell, thence would his Hand take you. *There is no Darkness nor Shadow of Death, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themselves* ||.

May the LORD, in rich Mercy, open your Eyes, make you sensible of your Danger, and enable you to turn to Him with

* Isa. x. 3.

§ Rev. vi. 16.

† Psa. xc. 11.

|| Amos ix. 2.

‡ Job. ix. 4.

Job xxxiv. 22.

all

all your Heart, *that so Iniquity may not be your Ruin** : But by looking and going to JESUS, *you may be delivered from the Wrath to come, and saved with an everlasting Salvation.*

Remember, CHRIST *is able to save the Chief of Sinners*† : *and invites all who are weary and heavy laden to come to him*‡. Beg of God then, to draw you effectually by his Spirit and Grace ; without which our Lord hath declared, *no one can come to Him*§. And for the Encouragement of such as see their Need of Him, and his Righteousness, He hath said, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out* ||. I will only add, that it will be in vain for you to expect Pardon now, and Happiness at last, in any other Way than by believing in Christ. He is the only Person *whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation, through Faith in his Blood* ¶. And the Apostle Peter, who was then under the immediate Inspiration of the

* Ezek. xviii. 30.

xi. 28.

iii. 25.

§ John vi. 44.

† 1 Tim. i. 15.

|| Verse 37.

‡ Matt.

¶ Rom.

infallible Spirit, and filled with the Holy Ghost, assures us, *there is no Salvation in any other; for there is no other Name under Heaven given among Men, whereby we must be saved* *.

* Acts iv. 12.

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